IV

January

T isit to Vcrlainc.[1]

Saturday

My Aunt Brianpon in bed, very ill, her mind wandering so much as to prevent her from recognizing anyone. I ler head on the pillow is transfigured, discolored, but not pale; rather a dull waxen yellow. The astonishing thing is that now she looks like my grandmother; her childhood features have reappeared under lhe deformation imposed by life but now obliterated by the suffering of death. She looks at me with dim eyes and I stand by her bed not knowing xvhal to say. Finally the nurse leans toward her and shouts in her ear:

"But this is your nephew, inadame. Don't you reeogutV.e him? It is Monsieur Gidc."

And, without understanding, my aunt repeats: "Monsieur Citle , , , Monsieur Gidc , . /' Then, all of a sudden, she cries out: "Oh! Andre! Andre, it's youP And I see her hand feebly trying to reach mine. I take her feverish hand and squeeze it hard as if I could express my affection in that way. And perhaps she tried to reply to my gesture, for T hear her murmuring: "Oh! Andrei my child, my poor Andre! . , ."

A great effort to speak, but too weak to find her words. And I weep to see that affection trying so hard., but unable, to pour forth.

Then I am seized by a great desire to shout out: 1 love you, aunt!,.. But already she is relapsing into her semi-coma and her eyes become fixed and sightless. And I am afraid of speaking for fear of distracting that soul perhaps intent on higher things* I close the curtains on her sleep so that nothing may disturb it.

Friday

Aunt Briangon's funeral,

. I shall not recount these things, for the emotion would lose its bloom

of sincere spontaneity if I analyzed it for the purpose of my writing.

Moreover, it did not make a very strong impression. It was all still very objective. My mind told me what impressions to have: they did not grip me.

However, a very painful emotion on seeing Aunt Charles weep* Her tears hurt me more than if I had wept them. I should have preferred sorrow to respect her and leave that pretty, thoughtful smile on her lips. It seems to me now that what prevents me from feeling lively

[1] At the Broussais Hospital. That visit has been very accurately related by Pierre Louys (see *Vers et Prose,* September 1910), [A.]